

Theresa's set to out-do Maggie!

By **Simon Walters** and **Glen Owen**

A DRAMATIC collapse in Labour support in the North of England could hand Theresa May a greater Election triumph than even Margaret Thatcher at her peak.

And it could lead to the Tories gaining seats they never dreamed of winning – including Tony Blair's former constituency of Sedgfield in County Durham.

The latest sign that Jeremy Corbyn's Labour faces being swept away by a blue tidal wave on June 8 comes from an unusually detailed 'mega-poll' of 40,000 voters.

Britain's leading election expert, Professor John Curtice, from Strathclyde University, said last night that the survey pointed to a majority for Mrs May as large as 172 seats because of disproportionately large swings to the Tories across Labour heartlands in the North of England and the Midlands.

By contrast, Labour's vote is holding up better in the south, where it has relatively few seats.

Professor Curtice said that nearly one in three Labour MPs could lose their seats because support for the party was 'falling most heavily where Labour has most to lose'.

The survey, published this weekend by pollster Lord Ashcroft, suggests that Mrs May's majority will rocket from the 17 she inherited from David Cameron last summer – and could even dwarf the 144 majority won by Mrs Thatcher in 1983, when she was buoyed by a surge of support after the Falklands War.

It would be the largest majority achieved by the Conservatives since the 1930s, with the number of Labour MPs plummeting from 230 to 161. Other Northern Labour seats at risk if the Ashcroft poll is correct include several held by Labour since the Second World War, including:

- Stalybridge and Hyde in Greater Manchester – which was held by the Blairite Cabinet Minister, and current BBC director of radio, James Purnell, until 2010
- Bradford South, where Labour whip Judith Cummins had a 6,450 majority in 2015
- Great Grimsby, held by Melanie Oon on a majority of 4,540 – formerly the seat of 1970s Foreign Secretary Tony Crosland
- Workington, where Shadow Envi-

Shock 'mega-poll' reveals true scale of Labour rout in North of England, with May set for 172-seat landslide



She'd even bag Blair heartland

A 172 COMMONS majority would leave Mrs May just short of Tony Blair's 179 majority in 1992, but could still give her the satisfaction of a Tory victory in Blair's former seat, Sedgfield in County Durham, held by Labour since 1935 and won by Phil Wilson in 2015 by 6,843 votes.

ronment Secretary Sue Hayman had a 4,686 majority.

To add insult to injury, according to the Ashcroft poll, Labour could also lose Cardiff South, the former seat of Labour PM James Callaghan, which was won by Labour in 2015 by 7,453 votes.

Labour's growing polling day panic was reflected in a bizarre plea by Trotskyist former BBC journalist Paul Mason for party supporters to use booze to get young Labour supporters to vote on June 8.

Lancashire-born Mr Mason, a member of Mr Corbyn's inner circle, called for pub 'drinking sessions' to boost the anti-Tory turnout. In a video message, he urged them: 'Have a house party the night before... have a drinking session in the pub on Election day. But drag your friends to that polling station.'

Young voters should back Mr Corbyn or 'anti-Brexit Lib Dems' to

stop Mrs May's Conservatives 'who want to crash the country,' said Mr Mason.

At their manifesto launch this week, the Tories are expected to pledge no VAT rises, while dropping their 2015 vow not to hike income tax and national insurance and re-affirm the target of cutting UK net migration below 100,000.

They are also set to announce plans to recruit 10,000 more NHS mental health staff; maintain the vow to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on overseas aid; impose a cap on household fuel bills; leave the EU Single Market as part of Brexit; and set up new grammar schools south of the Border.

Other pledges will give young people the right to erase embarrassing internet posts and MPs a new vote on fox hunting.

Craig Oliver: Page 31



WAVE OF SUPPORT: Margaret and Denis Thatcher celebrating her 1983 victory and, left, Theresa and Philip May at No 10 last year

Bungling Boris begged May: Don't sack me

By **Glen Owen** and **Brendan Carlin**

PANICKING Boris Johnson begged Theresa May for reassurance that he would not be sacked as Foreign Secretary – because he feared he would be 'toast' if she won a thumping General Election majority.

The Mail on Sunday has been told that Mr Johnson was worried he faced a humiliating demotion after being told that, if Mrs May wins a new Tory mandate on June 8, she plans to use it to radically reshape her Cabinet.

Well-placed sources say Mr Johnson was so alarmed he asked No 10 to make it clear he would keep his job. His allies claim he was told: 'Relax, you aren't going to be moved.'

However, other Government sources say maverick Mr Johnson cannot be '100 per cent sure' of keeping his prestigious post. 'If she wins by a landslide she can do anything she pleases with the Cabinet,' said one.

Mr Johnson is understood to have asked Downing Street for reassurance shortly after Mrs May called the snap Election. A friend said: 'Boris thought he was toast. He told us that he feared the worst, and expected to be moved from the FCO.'

He has been rattled by a series of recent run-ins with No 10 over the war in Syria. The disclosure came as Mr Johnson waded into the

Election campaign yesterday with a new personal attack on Labour, branding Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell the party's 'Marx brothers'.

He said Mr Corbyn would turn Britain into a Latin American-style banana republic like Venezuela, where inflation hit nearly 500 per cent a year under its late Marxist leader Hugo Chavez. Mr Johnson said: 'It's frightening the Marx brothers, Corbyn and McDonnell, see Venezuela as an example for a future Labour government'.

Two weeks ago, Mr Johnson called Mr Corbyn a 'mutton-headed mugwump'.

Mr Johnson is not the only senior Cabinet figure nervous about his future. Other sources claimed that assurances had also been given to Chancellor Philip Hammond, Home Secretary Amber Rudd and Brexit Secretary David Davis.

However, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom and Local Government Secretary Sajid Javid are thought to be vulnerable.

A spokesman for Boris Johnson last night denied the Foreign Secretary had ever said he was 'toast'. Downing Street declined to comment.



CONCERN: Boris Johnson feared for his job

Ukip leader is a 'dead man walking'

UKIP leader Paul Nuttall is a 'dead man walking' and could be gone 'within weeks', the party's largest donor has said.

Arron Banks, who gave £1 million to Ukip before the last General Election and more than £7 million to Nigel Farage's wing of the Brexit campaign, told The Mail on Sunday that he expected Mr Nuttall to be ousted within days of the June 8 poll, despite only having served as leader for seven months.

The intervention is the

By **Glen Owen** POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

latest blow to Mr Nuttall, right, who saw the party's share of the vote in the local council elections crash to just five per cent, shedding 107 of their 108 councillors in the process.

In February, Mr Nuttall failed to win the Stoke-on-Trent Central by-election, despite it being the 'Brexit capital of Britain'.

Mr Banks said: 'Mr Nuttall is the purple

Pinocchio who has not recovered from the loss of credibility he suffered in Stoke. He is a dead man walking. I expect him to be gone within weeks'.

When asked who he expected to take over, Mr Banks, who has now stopped bankrolling Ukip, tipped health spokeswoman Suzanne Evans, the former leadership contender.

The collapse of Ukip is having a critical impact on the Election, with the party haemorrhaging support, mostly to the Tories,

increasing the pressure on Labour MPs in Brexit-supporting areas – even seemingly safe seats.

Mr Nuttall, who is standing in Boston and Skegness in the General Election, has had a torrid time since he succeeded Nigel Farage.

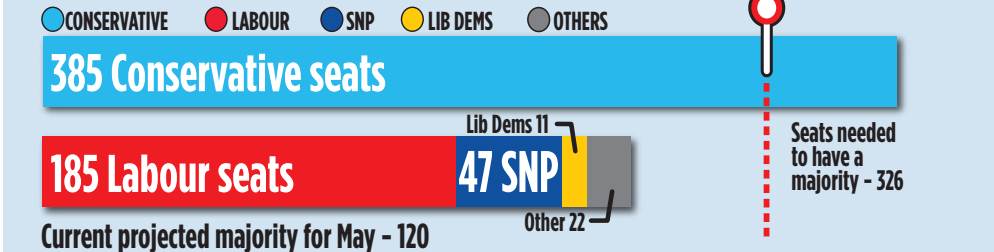
He faced widespread ridicule after The Mail on Sunday revealed false claims on his website that he had played professional football for Tranmere Rovers, while a LinkedIn page also falsely suggested

he had completed a PhD. The mistakes were blamed on an 'overenthusiastic researcher'.

Mr Nuttall insists Ukip's fortunes will turn around, saying: 'There are a huge bank of people in the North, in the Midlands and in working-class communities in the South who will never ever vote Conservative. And they are not going to vote for Jeremy Corbyn's Labour because they see him as unpatriotic, unrealistic and a throwback to the 1970s.'



The MoS seat-o-meter



THE Conservatives are a comfortable 18 points ahead of Labour in the polls – enough to deliver Theresa May an overall majority of 120, with Jeremy Corbyn reduced to a rump of 185 in this week's MoS seat-o-meter. Mrs May's win could be even greater. A mass-sample poll released by Lord Ashcroft on Friday suggests the tally of seats could reach a whopping 172. Not only is Labour making little progress, there is no sign of the much-vaunted Lib Dem revival either. Only in Remain-voting London is there much indication of any advance by Tim Farron's party.

Analysis by John Curtice, Professor of Politics, Strathclyde University.

CAMPAIGN CAMERA



Jezza win is a mission impossible

IT SEEMED Jeremy Corbyn had revealed his secret weapon last week – signing up Tom Cruise. A man with a striking resemblance to the Mission: Impossible star was pictured in Jezza's car – but it turned out to be his communications chief James Schneider.